

# SUMMER SPORTS SAFETY



Baseball, Basketball, Soccer ... *And More*

consumer *brief*

The advent of summer is an excellent time to take stock of important safety tips that can help ensure you maximize the fun of your favorite sports, while preventing serious injuries.

This Consumer Brief provides general tips that are relevant for most contact and semicontact sports such as football, basketball, soccer and baseball. Most of the information here comes from the Nemours Center for Children's Health Media and its **KidsHealth.org** website.

For more specific information about a given sport, refer to the list of "Additional Resources."

## USE THE RIGHT GEAR

**Helmets:** The right helmet is a must for sports such as baseball, lacrosse, and of course football.

Make sure your headgear is specifically designed for the sport you will be playing. And, where applicable, make sure that it is certified by a safety organization for that sport.

For example, football helmets should bear a label stating that they are NOCSAE (National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment) certified.

Helmets should also fit comfortably and snugly, without sliding around. They must enable you to see straight forward and from side to side. They must adequately protect your head, without sitting too high or low.

DO NOT use a helmet if it is cracked, dented or deformed, or if any pieces are missing.

(More info: For "Nine Innings of Brain Safety in Baseball" from the Consumer Product Safety Commission, [click here](#).)

**Shoes:** Protect against ankle, foot and leg injuries with shoes that are the right size and securely laced at all times.

Cleats are important for baseball, soccer, football, and other field sports. Wear molded plastic cleats, rather than metal ones. For basketball, choose sneakers with a sturdy, nonskid sole.

## Other Equipment:

**Mouthguards** can protect teeth, lips, cheeks and tongue. Athletes who wear glasses may want to use protective eyewear made of shatterproof plastic. Players with previous injuries should consider using **knee, ankle or wrist braces** for extra protection. Boys should wear **protective cups**, and many girls choose to wear **sports bras** for many sports. Athletes of both sexes also may want to wear supportive **athletic shorts**.

Many sports require extra protective equipment. Soccer players should wear **shin guards**. Catchers in baseball should wear **face masks**, full-length **chest protectors** and **throat guards**.

Football is a high-impact sport, and the leading cause of school sports injuries. It requires a great deal of protective gear, including **pads for the shoulders, hips, thighs, knees and tailbone**, that should be worn each time you play.

*Continued*



800-242-5846 • [www.NJConsumerAffairs.gov](http://www.NJConsumerAffairs.gov)

Office of the Attorney General



New Jersey Division of  
**Consumer  
Affairs**

## WHERE TO PLAY

Whatever your sport, be sure to inspect the playing field before the game or practice begins. Make sure the play area is free of debris, especially broken glass. Also, be sure to look for holes or other irregularities that could lead to sprained ankles. For night games, be sure to use a safe, well-lit area.

## BE SURE TO WARM UP

It's a good idea to get plenty of exercise, and eat a healthy diet, before the season starts. Staying in shape all year will help reduce the risk of injury and enable you to play harder, for longer periods of time.

All athletes should warm up and stretch before playing. Start with jumping jacks or jogging in place for a few minutes. Then slowly and gently stretch your muscles, holding each stretch for at least 30 seconds.

## DURING GAMES AND PRACTICES

Know and obey the rules of your sport. Learn and use proper technique. Improper technique when throwing a ball in baseball, or heading a ball in soccer, can lead to a painful injury.

Be aware of where you are on the field and what is happening around you at all times.

Always keep your head up! This is an important point for basketball, soccer, baseball, lacrosse, and many other sports – and especially football.

Keeping your head up will help avoid injury during collisions. It is especially important when making a football tackle. (In fact, leading a tackle with the top of your helmet, known as “spearing,” is illegal – and greatly increases your chance of suffering a traumatic head or neck injury).

Drink plenty of water before, during and after playing, especially during hot weather to avoid dehydration.

If you feel pain while playing, ask to come out of the game. Don't start playing again until the pain goes away. Playing through pain may seem brave, but it can increase the severity of the injury and keep you sidelined for a longer stretch of time.

Don't let a foul or disagreement escalate into a fight. Let the referees and coaches handle any disputes.

Make sure first aid is available where you play and practice, as well as someone who knows how to use it. A responsible adult should be present any time a sport such as baseball or football is played, in case a player becomes seriously hurt and needs to be taken to an emergency room.

## EXCESSIVE PLAY

Too much repetitive play can prolong stress-related injuries and make it harder to recover in the long run. Young players should always tell their parents and coach when they experience pain in joints or muscles, and should never ignore discomfort while playing.

Baseball pitching, in particular, puts a great deal of strain on joints and tendons. U.S.A. Little League and the American Sports Medicine Institute recommend limiting the number of pitches per day or week for young players, based on age. For example, 7- to 8-year-old players should throw no more than 50 pitches a day or 75 pitches a week. Players who are 17 to 18 can pitch up to 105 pitches a day.

## DON'T FORGET TO HAVE FUN

Following basic precautions, and remaining aware of what is happening on the field, will help you avoid most injuries – and enable you to keep enjoying the games you love.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

A wealth of safety information for parents and kids, including specific tips about all kinds of sports, can be found at:

KidsHealth (The Nemours Foundation)  
**KidsHealth.org**

BAM! Body and Mind (U.S. CDC)  
**cdc.gov/bam**

### DIVISION OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS

973-504-6200 ■ 800-242-5846 (toll free within New Jersey)

website: [www.NJConsumerAffairs.gov](http://www.NJConsumerAffairs.gov)



**800-242-5846 • [www.NJConsumerAffairs.gov](http://www.NJConsumerAffairs.gov)**

**Office of the Attorney General**



**New Jersey Division of  
Consumer  
Affairs**